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To: Mr. John M. Carson (at Knobbe, Martens, Olson & Bear, LLP)

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From: Maria N. Von Buhr (at USPTO)

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Serial No. 09/321,386
Art Unit 2171

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1. Examiner acknowledges receipt of Applicant's information disclosure statements, received 12/28/1999 and 3/6/2000, with accompanying reference copies, which have been taken into consideration for this Office action. Copies of the PTO-1449 forms are enclosed.
2. All claims are allowable over the prior art of record. However, due to a potential interference, *ex parte* prosecution is **SUSPENDED FOR A PERIOD OF 6 MONTHS** from the date of this letter. Upon expiration of the period of suspension, Applicant should make an inquiry as to the status of the application.

3. Any response to this Office action should be mailed to:

Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks
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Or faxed to the Office at:

(703) 308-6606 - for formal communications intended for entry;

Or faxed directly to the Examiner at:


(703) 746-6563 - for formal communications intended for entry, mark "FORMAL"
- for informal/draft communications; label "PROPOSED" or "DRAFT".

Hand-delivered papers should be brought to Crystal Park II, 2121 Crystal Dr., Arlington, VA, 4th Floor (Receptionist).

4. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the Examiner should be directed to Maria N. Von Buhr whose telephone number is (703) 305-3837. The Examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Thursday between 8:00 A.M. and 4:00 P.M.

If attempts to reach the Examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the Examiner's Supervisor, Thomas G. Black can be reached at (703) 305-9707.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application should be directed to the Group receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 305-3900.


MARIA N. VON BUHR
PRIMARY PATENT EXAMINER
ART UNIT 2171

MNVB
8/30/01

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